

In short, while the explosion of various forms of gambling across America has, of course, generated some revenue for States and for the gambling industry, it has left in its wake human misery that is only now beginning to be understood. This misery ends up costing the State more than it receives and creates a vicious cycle as the needs of social services dramatically increases. Whether it is a State lottery, a casino, or a cruise to nowhere, gambling is a poor bet for funding legitimate social needs.

And soon gambling will be in every home in America with an Internet connection. More than 850 Internet gambling sites worldwide had revenues in 1999 of \$1.67 billion, up more than 80 percent from 1998 according to Christiansen Capital Advisors, which tracks the industry. Revenues are expected to top \$3 billion by 2002.

I want this Congress, I want this Congress and this country, I want this administration, who talks about family values also to reflect on the seriousness of this issue. Frankly, I have heard no one in this administration speak out on this issue, although to their credit they are new, but we have sent letter after letter and they have not spoken out on this issue. This is not about whether or not one makes a decision of choice to travel to Las Vegas or Atlantic City and gamble for recreation. The reality is that such a choice takes planning and some time. As gambling spreads throughout the country, there is less planning time and much more availability for potential addicts to gamble. Imagine this availability being just one click away. This Congress and this administration needs to consider the seriousness of not passing an Internet gambling ban. Are we really ready to have a virtual casino in every home in America with an Internet connection?

Mr. Speaker, with all this hard evidence, who is speaking out against the spread of gambling? Crime, corruption, family breakdown, suicide, bankruptcy, and yet the silence is deafening. In fact, in this body, they passed a faith-based proposal yesterday which I supported, and the broken bodies will be helped by that faith-based community. Yet the Bush administration, whether it be Secretary Norton at Commerce or the White House itself has not spoken out on this issue. Where is the Bush administration on this issue?

I want to conclude by asking our political leaders, good people on both sides of the aisle, I want to ask our religious leaders, I want to ask those who care about the poor, that care about the poor that Jesus talked about in Matthew 25, I want to ask those who care about the elderly, I want to ask those who are always talking about family values to speak up on this issue, because if you do not speak up on behalf of the Nation's most vulnerable, who will?

VETERANS' HEALTH CARE NEEDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). The Chair reallocates 5 minutes of the balance of the majority leader's hour to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to come to the microphone today. I have been traveling the State of Florida for the past several months meeting with editorial boards trying to enlist their support on an issue that I consider vitally important to veterans in my State and veterans throughout the country. Veterans have fought for our country. Now they are forced to fight for their health care. 1.6 plus million veterans now live in the great State of Florida. Regrettably, with the State with the second largest population of veterans, we have one benefits claims center, in St. Petersburg. The average backlog of cases for veterans processing their claims is anywhere from 170 days to 275 days. As I tell my veterans in the community who are desperate to find answers to their claims, "The answers you get may not be the ones you want. I cannot guarantee you the answer satisfies your claim. They may reject your claim."

But, by God, we owe them an answer. We owe them, yes, you are approved for benefits or, no, you are not so they can at least go on to the appeals process. My good friend the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) will be addressing the Congress in a moment on military issues. I am chagrined that people who are brought to this fight to help us take down totalitarian regimes, to protect and provide freedom for our allies, who have fought wars like World War I, in fact, I have a veteran of World War I who lives in my community, 98 years old, Mr. Ross, veterans of World War II, Korea, Desert Storm, Vietnam and others are made to wait in line and wait for months to get answers to very simple questions.

I am thrilled the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and his committee on the supplemental just passed included at the request of myself and many, many Members of Congress an additional \$19 million for veterans benefit administration for unexpected claims processing costs. We should not have considered them unexpected claims processing costs because we should have known that this backlog existed. We have talked about it for months. We have pleaded with the past administration. I am delighted Secretary Principi has been actively involved in this issue.

Mr. Bush, when he campaigned for President and now as our Commander in Chief, spoke eloquently about the need to make certain that our fighting forces were well provided for and that we made troop readiness and troop morale a keystone of this administration. I applaud him for that and I certainly applaud Mr. Principi for his dogged pursuit of revising and providing leadership at the VA. I know he has answered many of my phone calls and let-

ters personally by telling me that he will be in the forefront of the fight to make certain that the efficiencies that we have long sought will finally come to bear.

The military has often told me that they are having a difficult time in recruiting people to serve in the armed services of our country.

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It may be that the veterans who have served before are telling them that it is not all what it is cracked up to be. I think if we decide to emphasize the need to provide these expedited claims processes, we would find more veterans thrilled with the idea that their government is standing by them, as they stood by us. Maybe you would find young recruits thinking about engaging in military service, when they asked a veteran, that they would get that gold-plated assurance that, yes, the government did stand by me after I had served and made my life better.

So I thank the gentlemen and gentlewomen who have participated in increasing the supplemental by this \$19 million. I urge us to do more. I urge us to do a lot more, because, again, if we are to be the kind of Nation that leads others to prosperity and peace abroad, if we are to be the Nation that holds the ideals of that flag behind the Speaker's rostrum to the high standards we would expect, if we are that Congress that believes that that flag deserves protection from desecration, that we ought to make certain that this Congress is the one that expedites the appeals process and the claims process for those valiant men and women who have risked their lives to make America strong and secure. We should do nothing less, and we must do much more.

MILITARY NEEDS MORE FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I have taken the floor a number of times over the last 8 years during the Clinton administration strongly criticizing the Clinton administration for what I consider to be a weakening of our national security. We had budgets that annually were short in terms of equipment being replaced, low pay for our military personnel, substandard housing for our military families, a lack of readiness, spare parts and training for our forces that might have to move around the world on a moment's notice, and overall shortchanging of national security by substantial amounts each year in the budget.

I want to go through the facts that I have laid out over the last several years with respect to what was then the Clinton administration's defense budget. First I pointed out that we have cut our military forces since 1991-